

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3628
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE
AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MADRID 02148

E.O. 11652 XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, OAU, AG, SP
SUBJECT: OAU COUNCIL OF MINISTERS REPORTEDLY APPROVES
ALLEGED LIBERATION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS ON CANARIES

REF: (A) TRIPOLI 285, (B) MADRID 1857

1. SUMMARY: OAU ACTIONS REGARDING THE CANARY ISLANDS
CONTINUE TO RECEIVE MAJOR PRESS PLAY AND TO BE FOCUS
OF COMMENTARY BY ALL SPANISH POLITICAL GROUPS, WHO ARE
WORRIED THAT AFRICAN SUPPORT FOR CUBILLO WILL HAVE
DESTABILIZING EFFECT NOT ONLY WITHIN THE CANARIES
THEMSELVES, BUT WILL ALSO AFFECT BROAD SPANISH FOREIGN
POLICY INTERESTS. THUS, GOS DELIVERED SERIES OF
"ENERGETIC PROTESTS" BOTH IN MADRID AND IN THE AFRICAN
CAPITALS INVOLVED. WITHIN SPAIN, THE GOS AND THE
LEADING OPPOSITION PARTY ARE EXCHANGING RECRIMINATIONS
OVER WHO IS AT FAULT FOR THIS DEVELOPMENT, WHILE THE
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CANARIES PRESS SHOWS CONCERN AT A POSSIBLE INCREASE IN
TERRORISM WITH CONSEQUENT EFFECTS ON THE ISLANDS'
IMPORTANT TOURIST INDUSTRY. THE INDIGNANT PRESS COMMENT
HAS INTER ALIA REVIVED OLD THEMES OF ALLEGED DESIGNS
OF THE US AND/OR NATO ON THE ISLANDS AND ONE COLUMNIST
ACTUALLY BLAMED WASHINGTON FOR OAU DECISION (SEPTTEL).)
FEELING IS THEREFORE RUNNING VERY HIGH ON THE OAU/CANARIES

ISSUE, WHICH NOW FIGURES TO RISE TO THE TOP OF SPANISH FOREIGN POLICY CONCERNS IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. UNDERLYING THAT FEELING ARE SPAIN'S TRADITIONAL SECURITY CONCERN WITH THE REGION, OUTRAGE AT WHAT ALL SPANIARDS CONSIDER AN ABSOLUTELY UNJUSTIFIED OAU STANCE, AND FRUSTRATION AT THE APPARENT ABSENCE OF EFFECTIVE ACTIONS THAT EITHER SPAIN OR ITS FRIENDS CAN TAKE. IN CONVERSATION WITH US, FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS EMPHASIZED THE EAST-WEST ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEM, AND NOTED THE POTENTIAL THREAT TO EUROPE OF SUCH A DANGEROUS PRECEDENT. THEY WERE ALSO PESSIMISTIC, IN VIEW OF DETERMINED AFRICAN ATTITUDES ON THE SUBJECT, AND EXPECTED THAT THE PROBLEM WOULD BE WITH THEM FOR YEARS TO COME.

END SUMMARY.

2. SPANISH HOPES THAT THE OAU COUNCIL OF MINISTERS WOULD REJECT OR DILUTE THE LIBERATION COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE CANARY ISLANDS WERE DASHED OVER THE WEEK-END AS REPORTS FROM TRIPOLI ASSERTED THE COUNCIL INSTEAD APPROVED THE COMMITTEE'S CALL FOR ECONOMIC AND LOGISTICAL SUPPORT FOR THE MPAIAC INDEPENDENCE GROUP. ACCORDING TO THE REPORTS, ONLY TWO COUNTRIES--MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA--VOTED AGAINST THE RECOMMENDATIONS.

3. THE FOREIGN MINISTRY REACTED WITH A SHARPLY WORDED COMMUNIQUE FEBRUARY 26 WHICH, WHILE NOTING THE COUNCIL

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MEETING HAD NOT YET ISSUED FORMAL NOTICE OF THE VOTE, BLASTED AS "INADMISSIBLE" THE OAU "INTERFERENCE" IN THE CANARIES, CALLING IT "A GROSS MANIPULATION WHICH DELIBERATELY IGNORES" THE ISLANDS' REALITY. THE MINISTRY ALSO ASSERTED THAT IT WAS MAKING THIS POINT TO ALL THE OAU AMBASSADORS IN MADRID AND WAS INSTRUCTING ITS OWN AMBASSADORS TO THOSE COUNTRIES TO DELIVER THE SAME "ENERGETIC PROTEST". THESE PROTESTS WERE MADE TO AFRICAN AMBASSADORS HERE FEB. 27 BY FOREIGN MINISTER OREJA.

4. WITHIN SPAIN, EXPRESSIONS OF INDIGNATION AND OUTRAGE CONTINUED, WITH THE SENATE REITERATING THE PROTEST RESOLUTION PASSED BY THE CONGRESS (REF B). CANARIES NEWSPAPERS VOICED CONCERN THAT THE OAU ACTIONS WOULD EMBOLDEN THE MPAIAC TO RENEWED ACTS OF TERRORISM, WITH CONSEQUENT EFFECTS ON PUBLIC ORDER AND ON THE TOURISM SO IMPORTANT TO THE ISLANDS' ECONOMY. PARTISAN DIVISION HAS ALSO ARISEN ABOUT THIS MATTER WITHIN SPAIN AS THE LEFT OPPOSITION, WITH THE SOCIALIST PSOE IN THE LEAD, CHARGING THE GOV'T WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR HAVING FAILED TO DEVELOP "A COHERENT FOREIGN POLICY". THE IMPLICATION

OF THE PSOE IS THAT THIS ALLEGED FAILURE PROVOKED ALGERIA REGARDING THE CANARIES BECAUSE OF GOVT MISHANDLING OF THE SAHARA PROBLEM. THE GOVT HAS COUNTERED WITH ACCUSATIONS THAT THE PSOE'S PRO-POLISARIO STANCE AND ITS MANIFEST IDEOLOGICAL SYMPATHY FOR ALGERIA ARE WHAT BROUGHT THE CANARIES ISSUE TO THE FORE.

5. AT LUNCH FEB. 27, THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S TWO TOP-RANKING OFFICIALS (ASST SECY AND DEPUTY ASST SECY LEVEL) FOR THE REGION, WHILE CRITICAL OF THE PSOE, LARGELY INTERPRETED THE OAU ACTION AS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF ANTI-EUROPEAN, ANTI-WESTERN ADVENTURING BY AFRICAN RADICAL

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STATES (THEY CITED PARTICULARLY ANGOLA, MOZAMBIQUE, BENIN, AND "THE THREE GUINEAS"). THE SPANISH WERE PARTICULARLY DISAPPOINTED, THEY SAID, AT THE FACT ONLY TWO AFRICAN NATIONS SAW FIT TO SUPPORT THE SPANISH POSITION ON THE CANARIES, AND THAT TUNISIA AND SENEGAL, HAVING PROMISED A PRO-SPANISH STANCE, EVIDENTLY COLLAPSED WHEN THE ISSUE WAS JOINED.

6. THE TWO OFFICIALS ALSO STRESSED THE ISSUE AS A POSSIBLE DANGEROUS PRECEDENT WHICH COULD COME TO BE APPLIED TO VIRTUALLY ANY ISLAND TERRITORY, INCLUDING MADEIRA, THE AZORES, EVEN CORSICA AND SICILY. IT WAS

ALSO AN ULTIMATE THREAT--BECAUSE OF THE STRATEGIC LOCATION OF THE CANARIES--TO FREE USE OF THE STRAITS OF GIBRALTAR, THEY STATED. EUROPE AND THE US, THEY SAID, SHOULD CONSIDER THIS (INCLUDING THE FACT THAT HALF THE SHIPPING THROUGH THE STRAITS IS BETWEEN SOUTHERN AND NORTHERN EUROPE), AND SHOULD CONSEQUENTLY MAKE AS EASY CONFIDENTIAL

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AS POSSIBLE SPAIN'S ENTRY INTO THE EC AS WELL AS NATO. THEY OFFERED NO NEAR TERM SUGGESTIONS, HOWEVER, AS TO WHAT THE U.S. OR OUR EUROPEAN ALLIES COULD DO TO EASE THE SITUATION.

7. WE RAISED WITH THEM THE FACT THAT THE LIBERATION COMMITTEE RESOLUTIONS AS RELEASED IN TRIPOLI MADE NO MENTION OF THE CANARIES (REF A). THEY ATTRIBUTED THIS TO QADHAFI'S "DOUBLE GAME", PART OF WHICH INVOLVES APPEARING TO HAVE RESPONDED TO THE SPECIAL TRIP TO LIBYA OF KING JUAN CARLOS' FATHER. THUS, THEY SAID, QADHAFI BANNED PRESS REFERENCES TO THE ISSUE. THE RESOLUTION NEVERTHELESS EXISTS, THEY SAID, EXPRESSING COMPLETE FAITH IN WHAT THEY TERMED UNIMPEACHABLE SOURCES.

8. THE HIGHLY INDIGNANT SPANISH PRESS TREATMENT OF THE OAU ACTION HAS, NOT SURPRISINGLY, CONTAINED INTER ALIA A REVIVAL OF OLD THEMES -- EVEN BY SOME OF THE MORE MODERATE COMMENTATORS -- ACCORDING TO WHICH THE US AND/OR NATO HARBOR HOPES OF GETTING A FOOTHOLD ON THE ISLANDS (SEPTEL ON THE NATO ANGLE). WE ARE THUS BLAMED FOR FAILING TO HELP OUR SPANISH TREATY PARTNER IN TRIPOLI BECAUSE OF ULTERIOR US DESIGNS ON THE ISLANDS AS WELL AS IMPORTANT ECONOMIC TIES TO THE NORTH AFRICANS.

9. COMMENT: CLEARLY, SPAIN HAS BEEN HIT HARD BY THE OAU ACTION. PART OF THE EMOTION ARISES FROM THE CONVICTION THAT THE OAU IS ENTIRELY OUT OF BOUNDS, THAT THE CANARY ISLANDS, BY EVERY MEASURE EXCEPT GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION, ARE COMPLETELY SPANISH. CONNECTED TO THIS ASPECT OF THE PROBLEM IS THE FLOWERING OF AUTONOMIST SENTIMENT THROUGHOUT SPAIN IN THE POST-FRANCO PERIOD, A DEVELOPMENT SEEN AS WORRISOME ABOVE ALL TO THE MILITARY, CONFIDENTIAL

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VITALLY CONCERNED WITH NATIONAL INTEGRITY AND DEFENSE. ALSO UNDERLYING GOVERNMENT CONCERNS ARE THE RELATED ELEMENTS OF SPAIN'S TRADITIONAL SOUTHERN FOCUS IN ITS

DEFENSE OUTLOOK, AND ITS AWARENESS OF THE HEIGHTENED VULNERABILITY OF THE CANARIES FOLLOWING SPANISH WITHDRAWAL FROM THE WESTERN SAHARA. WHILE PARTISAN WRANGLES SEEM LIKELY TO CONTINUE OVER WHO AT HOME IS TO BLAME FOR THE OAU ACTION, THERE HAS BEEN NO SIGN OF DIFFERENCE WITHIN SPAIN OVER THE CONVICTION THAT THE CANARIES ARE SPANISH AND ARE TO REMAIN SO. THE ISSUE NOW FIGURES TO RISE TO THE TOP OF SPANISH FOREIGN POLICY CONCERNS, AND TO REMAIN A HIGHLY CHARGED ONE, NOT ONLY BECAUSE OF THE EMOTIONAL INPUT REPRESENTED BY THE FACTORS LISTED ABOVE, BUT BECAUSE OF THE STRONG SENSE OF FRUSTRATION APPARENT BOTH IN THE PRESS COMMENT AND IN OUR CONVERSATION WITH THE TWO MFA OFFICIALS AND WITH VARIOUS POLITICAL LEADERS. THE FACT IS, NO ONE HAS YET IDENTIFIED ANY CONCRETE ACTIONS EITHER SPAIN OR ITS FRIENDS CAN NOW TAKE TO DEAL WITH THIS ISSUE CLEANLY AND DEFINITELY IN SPAIN'S FAVOR. IF THE PROBLEM HAS TARRED THE PSOE WITH THE ALGERIAN BRUSH, IT HAS ALSO LEFT THE GOS LOOKING INEFFECTUAL, THEREBY INCREASING GENERAL FRUSTRATION. STABLER

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